

Minutes

California Biodiversity Council Regional Meeting, Alturas, California August 29, 2002

Council Members in Attendance

Co-chairs:

Mary Nichols, California Resources Agency
Mike Pool, Bureau of Land Management

Members:

Art Baggett, State Water Resources Control Board
Doug Balmain, San Joaquin Valley Regional Association of California Counties
Chuck Bell, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Jack Blackwell, USDA Forest Service
Ruth Coleman, California Department of Parks and Recreation
Alex Glazer, University of California
Jerry Harmon, San Diego Association of Governments
Bob Haussler, California Energy Commission
Bob Hight, California Department of Fish and Game
Nancy Huffman, Northern California Counties Association
Beth Jines, California Environmental Protection Agency
Jim Lecky, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
Jeff Lovich, USGS Western Ecological Research Center
Robert Meacher, Regional Council of Rural Counties
Frank Michny, Bureau of Reclamation
Glen S. Pearson, Department of Water Resources
Jim Shevock, National Park Service
Michael Shulters, US Geological Survey
Steve Thompson, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Andrea Tuttle, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Al Wright, Wildlife Conservation Board

Opening Remarks

Mary Nichols and Mike Pool opened the meeting at 8:05 am and welcomed the group. They first thanked Tim Burke and Jeff Fontana (Bureau of Land Management), Sean Curtis and Nancy Huffman (Modoc County), and Nancy Gardner (Modoc National Forest) for their help in organizing the meeting.

Chris Nota – CBC Executive Committee Report

Chris alerted the Council that dues would be invoiced in early September and asked for quick payment. She provided an overview of the upcoming joint meeting with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) in Pasadena. This meeting will occur on November 18 & 19 and will highlight LAFCOs (Local Agency Formation Commissions), permitting issues, and recreation demands in a growing urban area. The February 12 & 13, 2003 meeting will focus on Environmental Justice and will be held near Sacramento.

Special Award Ceremony

Mary Nichols and Mike Pool presented special service awards to Bill Stewart, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CBC Staff Chair, 1996-2000), and Mike Chapel, USDA Forest Service (CBC Staff Chair, 2000-present), for their excellence as past and present chairs of the staff committee.

Council Announcements

- **Mondy Lariz** (CA CRMP) introduced himself to the CBC and provided a copy of the annual report for the CRMP program. Mr. Lariz is the new director of the CRMP program (www.cacrm.org).
- **Luree Stetson** (California Resources Agency) provided an update of the workshops for the California Legacy Project (www.legacy.ca.gov). Nancy Huffman asked Ms. Stetson if the Legacy Project would be mapping conservation lands. Luree responded that the Project would map both public and private easements.
- **Jim Shevock** (National Park Service) reported that John Reynolds (Regional Director, National Park Service, Pacific West Region) retired as of August 03 and will be replaced by John Jarvis, currently the Park Superintendent of the Mount Rainier National Park.
- **Alex Glazer** (University of California, Natural Reserve System) reported on the accomplishments of the snowy plover recovery effort near Santa Barbara.
- **Ruth Coleman** (Department of Parks and Recreation) described the importance of the Plover recovery to DPR as well as some general information regarding their natural resource practices.
- **Steve Thompson** (US Fish and Wildlife Service) complimented the significant coop venture among many agencies to recover plovers.
- **Larry Ruth** (University of California) reminded the group of the October 7-10 Sierra Science Symposium at Lake Tahoe. For more information on the Symposium, please visit <http://danr.ucop.edu/wrc/snssweb/snss.html>.
- **Bruce Bartholomew** (California Academy of Sciences) alerted the group that he brought a poster display titled "Museums as the Natural Repositories of Biodiversity Data".

Field Trip Summary (Nancy Huffman)

Nancy thanked the Council for such a large attendance at the field trip; she truly appreciated the number of people that took the time to take the tour, as this is one of the most pressing issues in the area. Since all of the CBC members attended the field trip, she did not provide a detailed reviewed. Tim Burke (Alturas BLM) passed out some supplemental information about the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) support system and strategic plan for address juniper encroachment. Mr. Burke noted that the purpose of the field trip was to develop four main points:

1. Raise awareness of the juniper issue in the western United States.
2. Show how the BLM, Forest Service, and County all work together
3. Convey some content oriented details regarding juniper management
4. Raise the interest and enthusiasm of participants.

Mr. Burke felt that these four points were well achieved.

PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

The Modoc County Land-Use Committee

Vicki Cochran (County Counsel, Modoc County)

Ms. Cochran noted that environmentalists, agency staff, and landowners all have similar goals for the land. But there is a difference between those that live on the land and those that visit. Modoc County is a community that lives on the land and 70 percent of the land is in federal ownership. Another 15 to 20 percent is dependent on water that flows from the federal land. The County therefore is very interested in public land management issues and has made a serious effort to integrate their programs and standards with the federal agencies. State and federal law and policy are the starting points for local planning. She explained that the formation of the Modoc County Land Use Committee is founded in the directives for public participation in federal laws like the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Forest Management Act. The goal is to help sustain the environment as well as the lifestyles of the community.

Sean Curtis (Resource Analyst, Modoc County)

Mr. Curtis explained that the Modoc County Land Use Committee is Nancy Huffman's legacy to Modoc County. He noted that the committee is comprised of 24 members that reflect all sectors of the public. It meets monthly and makes regular recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The committee reviews proposed agency programs, projects, and regulations. The goal is to find win-win solutions that meet the needs of the agencies and the community. The committee serves as a think tank, negotiating table, and war room. Mr. Curtis cited several examples of projects where the Land Use Committee has helped the County find solutions to issues with state and federal agencies.

Discussion

Following the presentations, Mary Nichols asked the speakers to contrast the value of advisory committees that are organized by the agencies versus those that emerge locally like the Modoc County Land Use Committee. Mr. Curtis responded that agency-led committees could be less productive where the staff doesn't fully understand and embrace the value of community discussions. Locally led projects can overcome this, as they are independent from the agencies.

Mike Pool asked for reaction from the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Tim Burke (BLM), Edie Asrow (FS), and Kathleen Jordan (FS) all expressed their support for the Land Use Committee and their wish that it continue. Nancy Huffman sought to form the Committee because she and other county supervisors recognized that they did not have the skills or resources to address large issues on public lands.

Jack Blackwell (FS) expressed his strong interest in agencies cooperating with counties and communities more consistently. He commended Modoc County for their good work and will be seeking similar relationships with other counties.

Secretary Nichols noted that many local advisory councils have been attempted throughout the state. She asked Sean Curtis how this particular one has thrived. Mr. Curtis responded that this process has no single igniting issue; only lots of little issues. They understood that there was already a substantial amount of time and energy devoting to fixing problems in the area. Sean also indicated that this was a completely voluntary process. He felt that two factors fostered

success of the Committee including a very supporting Board of Supervisors and innovative federal agencies like the Forest Service and BLM.

Steve Thompson (Fish and Wildlife Service) asked Mr. Curtis how an agency like FWS could make information more available to assist rural counties with little resources. Sean first indicated that they should not rely solely on the web. He noted that with the Federal Register, they have no method or organized effort to monitor it: information is only passed through networks. Sean further stated that it is not helpful to receive superfluous mailings every day, but to just be generally aware of the major issues (e.g. proposals and rule-making) that each agency is undertaking. If they know the topic, then they can contact the agency for more information.

Bob Meacher (RCRC) asked that the Biodiversity Council revisit it's work with the Regional Council of Rural County to build capacity in rural counties. Mary Nichols directed the Executive Committee to report on this at the next meeting.

The Upper Pit River Watershed Project

Edith Asrow (District Ranger, Warner Mountains District, Modoc National Forest)

Edie introduced the panel and provided some history on the conflicts around range management in Modoc County. She explained that Modoc County has embraced the Forest Service's Experimental Stewardship Program and is working to implement it in the Upper Pit River. The approach involves all interests and operates by consensus recommendations and an increased emphasis on all-party monitoring.

Edie also described the Warner Mountains Rangeland Project. This was a collaborative effort that developed a science-based livestock management strategy for 350,000 acres, using state-of-the-art GIS (Geographic Information Systems) data support. Modoc County provided much of the social and economic assessment for the plan. The strategy focused on resolving the key concerns brought to the working group by the participants. The plan was included at part of the Sierra Nevada Framework Project.

Paul Bailey (Modoc National Forest)

Paul discussed the Hakamore Ecosystem Planning Project, which is a subunit of the Pit River Watershed Project. The focus for this project is to develop and maintain a sustainable resource management program for a sub-basin of the Pit River. Emphasis is devoted to fuels management, wildlife habitat, forest pests, and transportation. The planning was done in concert with the Modoc County Land Use Committee, local tribes, other agencies, and the public. Over 5,000 acres have been treated since the Record Of Decision (ROD) for the program was signed in 2000. The project involved less time and is treating more acres than previous projects that were done with less coordination and public participation.

Dick Mackey (Central Modoc Resource Conservation District)

Mr. Mackey explained that the Central Modoc Resource Conservation District (RCD) became very active when several water bodies in the County were designated as "impaired" in the late 1990s. The group then began monitoring water quality and educating the local community about water-related issues. This work gave rise to the Pit River Alliance to coordinate water-related work in the Pit River Basin. Mark Steffek was hired as the coordinator for the Alliance.

Mark Steffek (Pit River Alliance)

Described the composition and operation of the Pit River Alliance. The Alliance is comprised of decision makers from 21 private and government interests. The group was formed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). It focuses on community-based coordination and management of watershed programs. The Alliance involves about 4,300 square miles of the public and private lands. The group is working on a watershed assessment, community involvement plan, education and outreach processes, and ultimately, a strategic management plan for the Upper Pit River. There is broad community acceptance and participation in this work.

An Overview of the Klamath River Management Issues**Bob Davis (US Bureau of Reclamation)**

Bob described the history of the Klamath River Project that is administered by the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). The Klamath River Project began in 1902 as a water storage, delivery, and flood control project. Roughly 0.3 - 0.5 million acre-feet of water are diverted to irrigate about 250,000 acres of farmland by the project. Conflicts over water allocations began to emerge in response to draught conditions of early 1990s. Allocations for tribes came first, followed by in stream uses for fish and other natural resources. USBR has already spent over \$25 million on studies, improvements, and other needs related to allocation issues. Legal challenges continue over allocation of water from the system. Last year, low rainfall stimulated the biggest controversy over uses of the river due to conflicts among all entitled uses. Deliveries were halted for agricultural uses and water to the Tule Lake and Lower Klamath wildlife refuges was seriously reduced. The preponderance of flows was left in the river for fish species at risk. The agencies are now working on a ten-year plan for water allocations that is intended to reduce the level of conflict in the future.

Jim Lecky (National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA)

Mr. Lecky explained that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is entrusted with the recovery of the listed Coho salmon. The Coho has precipitously declined in recent years. Coho salmon use the Klamath system for spawning and rearing. NMFS has determined that, in their opinion, increased flows are needed for recovery because the flows will improve rearing and survival to ocean habitat. He explained that a biological opinion is a science-based policy document that makes recommendations. Best professional judgment is often the predominant source of information available to develop agency opinions. Mr. Lecky noted that there is presently no conclusive scientific information on the relationships of increased flows and Coho population trends.

In 2002, NMFS found a jeopardy condition for Coho with the USBR operation proposal for the Klamath River Project. The agencies are currently working on ways to increase flows over time while avoiding some of the difficulties of 2001. NMFS has agreed to limit the accountability of the USBR for Coho recovery to 57 percent of the water needs as they provide that proportion of irrigation to agriculture. USBR has agreed to help secure commitment for the other 43 percent from others who provide irrigation.

John Engbring (Fish and Wildlife Service)

Mr. Engbring explained that two species of endangered suckers exist in the Klamath system—the short-nose and Modoc sucker. Large numbers existed in the past and a population of 500 osprey was once supported by a sucker-based food supply at Tule Lake. Klamath Lake is the last stronghold as the species have largely been extirpated from other areas. The Fish and

Wildlife Service (FWS) biological opinion found that a "jeopardy" condition existed and the identification of recovery measures was initiated. Raising the level of Klamath Lake was identified as a major recovery need. That level could not be provided with the runoff of 2001 and the agencies negotiated a reduced level for one year.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) produced a report later that year to evaluate the science to support the biological opinion of the FWS. The report supported all of the FWS recommendations except one, which specified a target lake level. The NAS recommended a range of lake levels. The FWS will revise their biological opinion, which now allows for varying lake levels that correspond to different runoff conditions. The FWS still maintains that "jeopardy" status exists and recovery measures are needed. They are working with the other agencies to accomplish anticipated water management procedures that are needed for recovery.

Troy Fletcher (Yurok Tribe)

Mr. Fletcher stated that entire Klamath Basin is Indian Country and all activities there affect local tribes. The main four tribes are the Yurok, Klamath, Tule River, and Hoopa. He noted that these tribes have legal entitlements to prescribed flows, which were negotiated with the federal government many years ago. The tribes are working together to look after their needs. He noted that Indians have been living with conditions experienced by Klamath basin farmers in 2001 for over 100 years. They continue to live in poverty as a result of settlements of the past. Native American tribes want to be significant players in the determination of long-term solutions for water management in the Klamath Basin. He questioned a focus on individual species management under the ESA and stressed the need for managing ecosystems. Mr. Fletcher stressed that if there are incentives for maintaining the status quo (and he suggested there are now), the long-term problems will not be solved. He offered that there needs to be a clear directive to work out the differences among agencies.

Mary Nichols adjourned the meeting at 12:10 PM and thanked the local people who helped organize the meeting.

#

**The next CBC Regional Meeting will be held in
Pasadena, California on November 18 & 19, 2002.**